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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

KOREAN IKAT

By

Kyung S. Lee

May 1984

APPROVALS

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To my Parents

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself without a sewing machine, broad fabric, simple paper patterns, a tape measure, or even a sharp pair of scissors. These are the beginning of folkloric clothes. The clothes for the most part are made from square and oblong pieces, put together like a jigsaw puzzle with narrow fabric lengths from hand looms. They are made of curving circles, curves and tapered seams, with no waste of materials. It all sounds very primitive, but on a closer inspection, traditional clothes are everything that most modern fashions are not. They are practical, versatile, comfortable, durable and flattering; in short, masterpieces of style. Style always begins with a simple shape, and above all, simple shapes are functional and practical. But what has function to do with fashion? Only the fact that the best known names in fashion design have established their reputations by turning their backs on functionality, concentrating on style. And where do they seek inspiration? Coco Chanel's famous coats were based on the Breton fisherman's blouse. Coco Chanel admits, "I get many ideas from simple clothes worn by muscle workers who have nothing to do with fashion."<sup>1</sup>

The patterns of traditional Korean clothes are very simple and functional also. Since these patterns are already functional and change only slowly, attention is focused on the surfaces, colors, patterns and textures.

The three garments designed are based on simple traditional patterns. These patterns relate beauty to simplicity in traditional design.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL REFERENCE ON THE KOREAN HAHN-BOCK

"Traditional Korean costumes have a history of approximately 2,000 years, during which time many changes have occurred. However, Korean costumes have adhered to the principle of two pieces--a jacket to cover the upper part of the body and trousers to wear on the lower half of the body, as in the case of the suit in the Western culture.

Somewhere around the first century A.D., people wore the Chogori (coat), Paji (trousers), and Turumagi (top coat); shortly after this, women adopted the Chima (skirt), replacing trousers."<sup>2</sup>

Clothes have a history of indicating man's status in society. All cultures have a place for the expression of the individual. Successful individuals gain privileges, rewards, and the opportunity to display the symbols of their achievement in clothes. To wear such symbols is to express pride and have, almost paradoxically, both a place within the group and a special status. In Korea, certain clothes were worn by particular levels of society. The four levels are: monarchy, high level, middle and low (based upon one's age). The clothes worn by the different groups are each of a different style. Traditional costumes are worn for events such as weddings, funerals and celebrations. Just as the costume is affected by the special nature of the wearer, so the wearer is affected by the nature of the costume.

The traditional Korean costume emphasizes the individuals' status in society. For example, Korean children of both sexes dress in bright colors, which are changed at marriage by the rich colors of the

matrimonial wedding dress. The bride wears a gown of silk adorned with embroidery and bright touches of red, yellow, green, dark blue, and purple. She wears on her head a beaded crown embellished with flowers and other delicate objects. The groom wears a hat of black velvet. It is the first time he is allowed to wear any hat at all, except for shade in the fields. He wears white underclothes covered with a bright red coat bound with a dark belt and a silver buckle. After marriage, the young adults wear special clothes. For a man, this means pants or pantaloons, a blouse and a sash as a belt. The most recognizable item in Korean clothing is the black horsehair-brimmed hat of the older man. Along with his pipe, cane and beard, this marks his honorable status and age.

Today, men and women wear the Hahn-Bock; mostly at home or at various celebrations. In the streets of Korea, women can still be seen in this ancient and colorful garment. The Hahn-Bock has full-curved sleeves, and is ample as well as dimensional. The long skirt can be worn overlapping across the back of the body (right to left), and is made of silk or cotton. Sometimes, it is quilted and decorated with many colors. For footwear, both men and women wear Bau-Sun (Korean traditional socks). The Go-Mu-Shin rubber shoes are worn outdoors.

Women's clothing, whether formal, festive or informal, is frequently brightly colored. It is often finished with fine colored embroidery and other quilted decoration adding to the feminine quality of these costumes.

## CHAPTER III

### USE OF COLORS

The use of colors defines another important dimension for establishing compositional and emotional effects with each garment. The selection of colors is based on my interpretation of each individual's personality.

Soft pastel colors are used to add a feeling of grace and elegance. Strong dark colors are used to add a feeling of richness and strength.

Combinations of soft and strong colors are used to support the structure, enhancing the viewer's attention, and manipulating the direction of each visual exploration. The introduction of small amounts of a contrasting color establishes an attractive tension between each of the colors, emphasizing their combined effect on the piece.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROCESS OF IKAT WEAVING

FIGURE 1: Original Design on Graph Paper (Size of original design - 4" x 4")

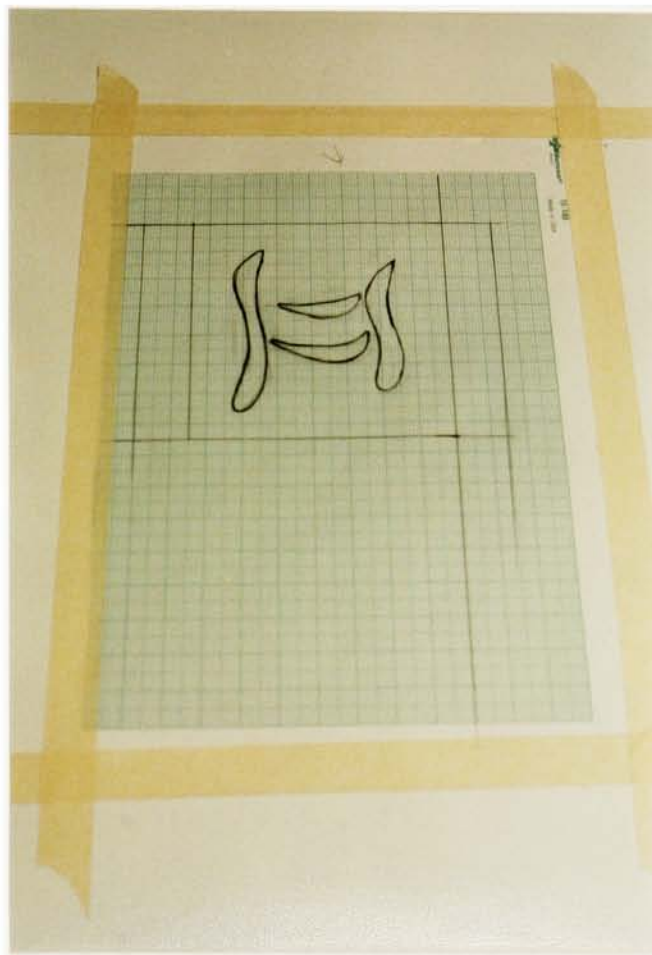


FIGURE 2: Recording Pattern on Tape (with permanent marker)

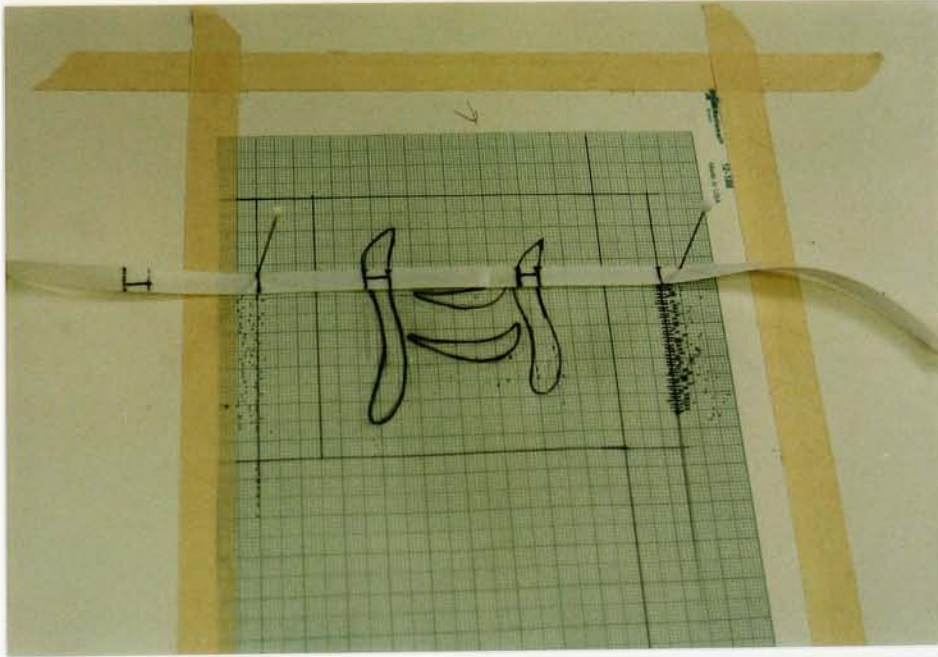




FIGURE 3: Stretching Recorded Pattern Tape After Which The Weft Threads Are Stretched Around The Tape



FIGURE 4: Balloon Shreads Are Wrapped Around The Tape And Threads At The Premarked Positions For The Resist Dyeing

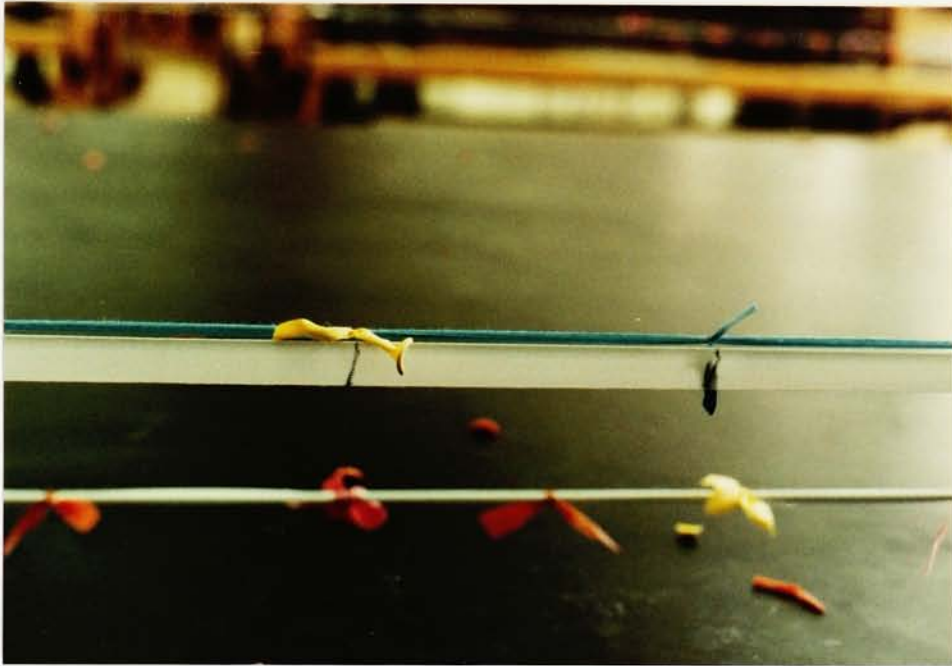


FIGURE 5: Completed Weft Tying With Balloon Threads

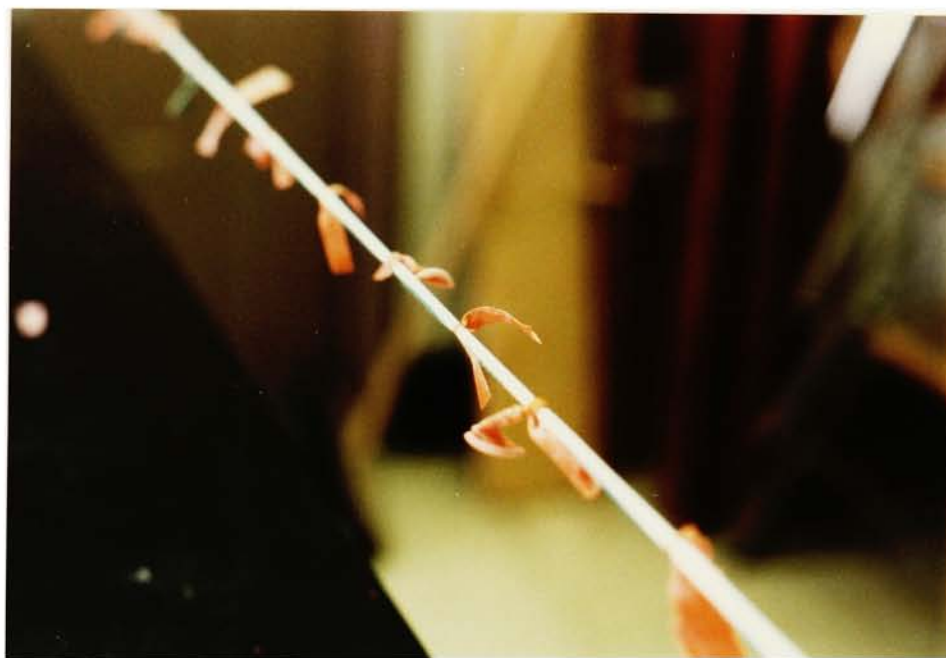




FIGURE 6: Chained Threads Prepared For Dyeing



FIGURE 7: Dyeing (Approximately 35 to 40 minutes)



FIGURE 8: The Weft Is Re-Stretched For Removing Of All Balloon Ties

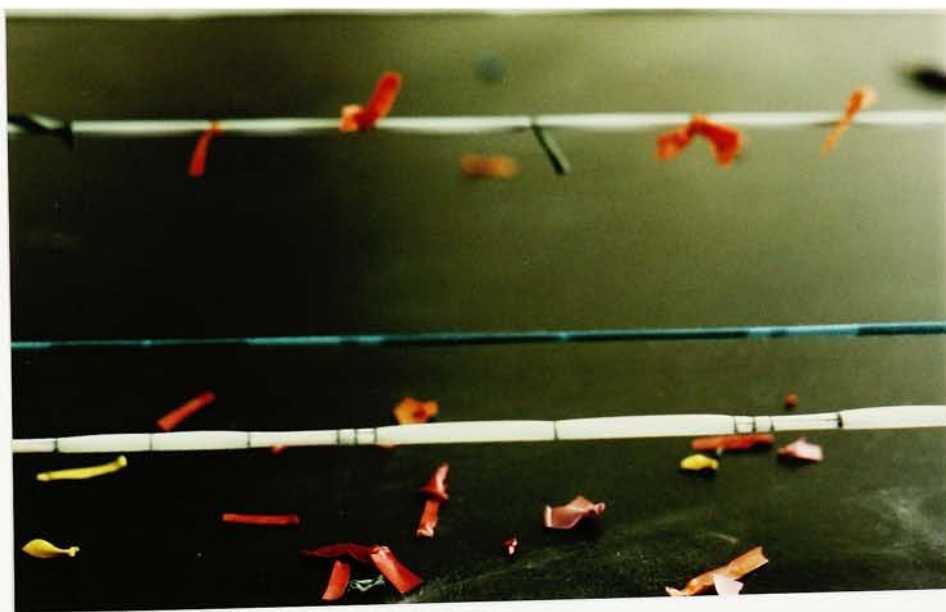


FIGURE 9: The Weft After All Balloon Ties Have Been Removed



FIGURE 10: Preparing The Flat Shuttles: The Newly Dyed Weft Is Dried, The Resist Ties Removed, And Each Weft Yarn Wound Onto Flat Shuttles. It Is Necessary For Individual Threads To Be Wound Around A Flat Shuttle For Proper Order In Weaving. Each Shuttle Is Numbered In Sequence.



FIGURE 11: Each Flat Shuttle Is Marked Carefully With Tape To Show The Starting Point

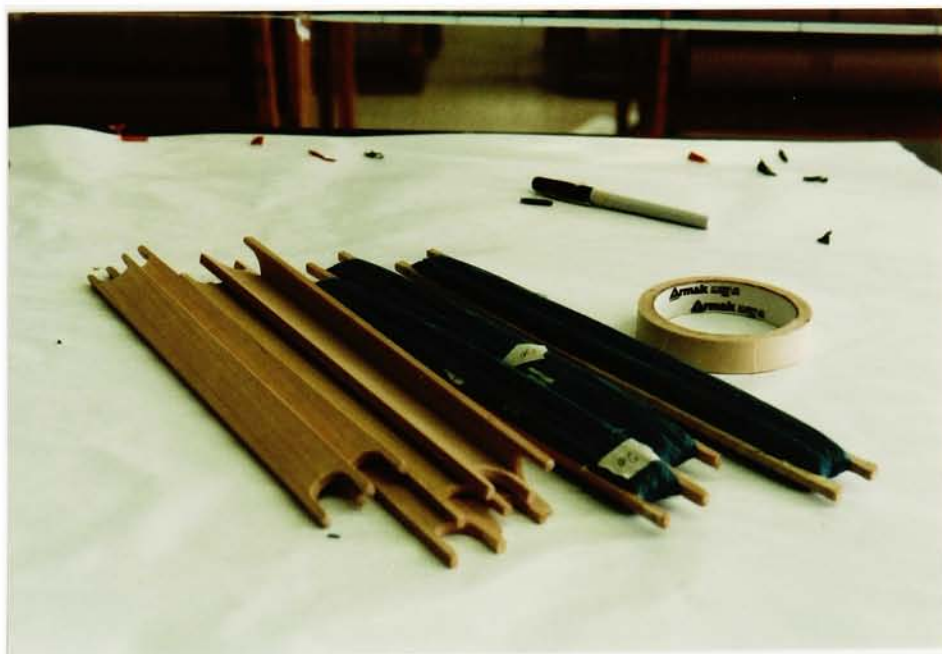




FIGURE 12: View Of The Weaving

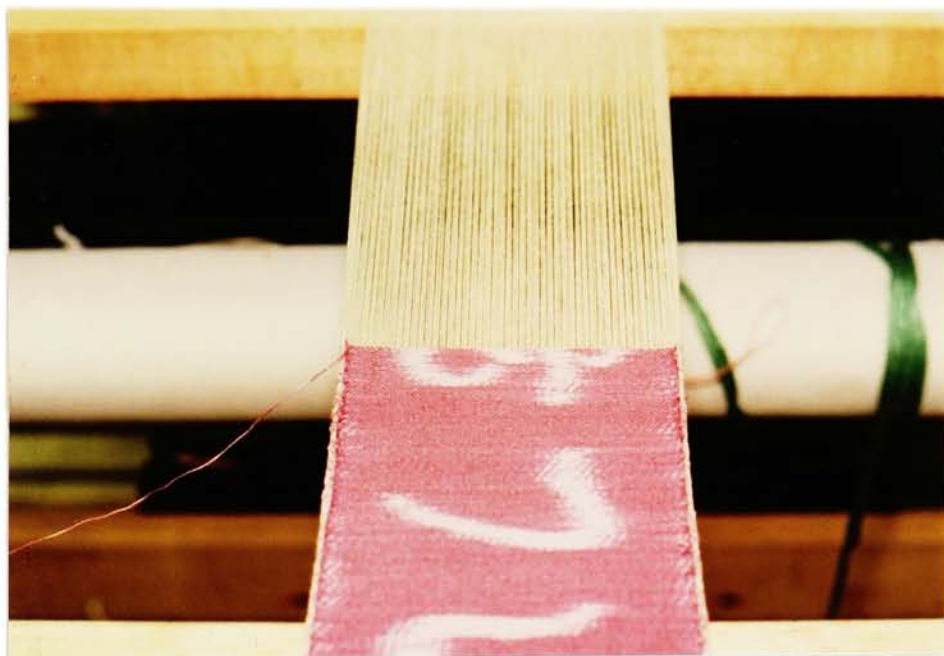
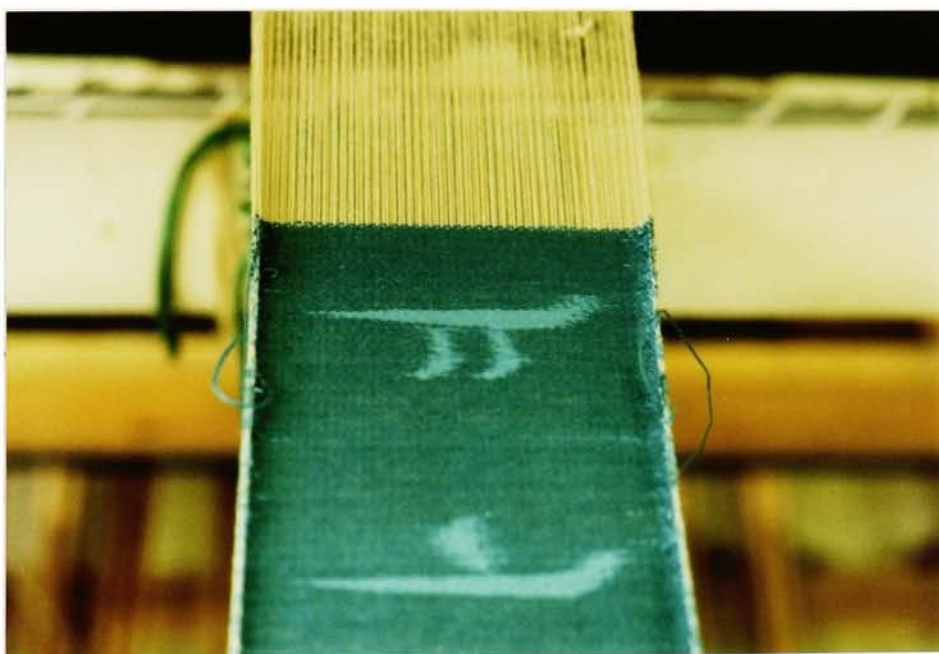


FIGURE 13: Both Front And Rear View of Weaving



FIGURE 14: The Last Step, Weaving Of The Final KASURI!





## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF THESIS WORK

#### A. Paji, Chogori (Pants, Jacket)

The form and materials used for the man's jacket and pants combine traditional and contemporary elements. One of the series incorporates a lustrous commercial fabric using a hand-tied Weft Ikat band (four inches wide) of fourteen consonants among the Korean letters (Hahn-Gul).

the use of Ikat bands breaks the rule of a traditional symmetrical man's jacket and has encouraged me to adopt a contemporary asymmetrical interpretation.

The other jacket was constructed with woven Ikat bands and contrasting colors of piping. A dynamic linear pattern is created by applying the handwoven band (described above) to the full length of the right sleeve, the left side of the pants and around the waist. It was not used on the right half of the front of the jacket. This jacket has a very definite form that relies more on the style of the application than upon the location of the woven band. Consequently, this style in the man's garment provides a new approach by attempting to combine traditional symmetry with a modern subjective asymmetry.

Working from sketches, I constructed models from muslin fabrics. This helped me to visualize the drawings and inspired me to style the

garments from my first design which I had drawn on paper, creating a pattern.

As discussed earlier, I perceived the garment to be intimately related to the personality of the individual for whom it was created. Specifically, the inspiration for the man's garment was my father. The combination of burgundy and yellow-pink expresses my perception of him as a steady and loving father.

FIGURE 15: Paji, Chogori (Pants, Jacket)



## B. Chima, Chogori (Skirt, Jacket)

In response to various forms and materials, two different series of women's jackets emerged. One series incorporated a 100% polyester fabric with hand-woven cotton bands (four inches wide) in Ikat patterns, which represents ten vowels from the Korean alphabet.

My initial approach to the work including having a conceptual base for understanding the beauty of lines and the meaning of the traditional costume.

The traditional Korean woman's dress consists of a skirt and a blouse. The skirt is full-length, that is it reaches from above the bosom to the ankles. It is wide--it never exposes the shape of the body. The blouse is very short, covering only a few inches of the skirt. It is tight over the bosom, with long and extremely wide sleeves. The effect of the hidden lines is partly to subsume her beauty, partly to enable her to embrace the universe.

My first attempt at construction involved working with hand-woven fabrics. However, it was impossible to realize my initial ideas. The original expectation of weaving all materials myself had to be reassessed in order to finish the garments on time. On the other hand, this was a good experience to combine commercial fabrics with hand-woven materials.

The woman's garment is an attempt to characterize my mother. The choice of colors--greenish pastel blue--defines her as generous and calm.

FIGURE 16: Chima, Chogori (Skirt, Jacket)





### C. Paji, Chogori (Pants, Jacket)

This woman's jacket is the essence of combining warp Ikat hand-woven fabric and Weft hand-woven Ikat fabric. This implies an experience different from the solid background fabric with Weft Ikat patterns. I used Warp woven Ikat fabric with inspiration from the butterfly, **which has vivid colors and wings** similar to the sleeves. The Ikat technique is a fabulous way of **mixing colors**. One can create almost any feeling in fabric by using **different** color tones. To get a lustrous, energetic, and rich fabric, I wove a satin weave (the Weft face, c. of 5). The details at the side of the sleeves derive from the patterns of butterfly's **wings**. The sign that is repeated on the sleeves provides yet another representation of a Korean vowel, previously applied to my mother's garment. Looking carefully at this pattern reveals repeated **transpositions** of this vowel, forming a chain-like pattern.

My **favorite colors** are the jewel colors, since they are clear and rich-looking. I also like pink ruby, blue tones of diamond, green jade, and blue emerald. I imagined **that my garment** could become a characterization of myself, like the painter's self-portrait. The inspiration for my wearable art was the ruby clover butterfly.

FIGURE 17: Paji, Chogori (Pants, Jacket)



#### D. Wall-Hanging Pieces

The inspiration for making the wall hanging pieces came from working with the garments and the Ikat studies. One of the two pieces exploits my love for the seashell. It is the most beautiful creature in nature. Her colors are pastel; milky, moody and fantastic. Beyond these expressions, I tried to depict the reality of the seashell; sand, sunshine, and **the infinite horizontal lines** on the soft surface. It is rare that commercial fabrics can serve as the medium for my feelings toward reality. However, while sampling these commercial fabrics, I realized that each commercial fabric does indeed have its own characteristics.

In the other handling (the seashell pattern), the same technique (Ikat--as was described when characterizing my parents' dresses) was used.

I created one simple seashell pattern by weaving in different directions, using different starting points. Originally, the pattern is made by moving from the left to the right, from the initial starting position, while the other transposition pattern is made by beginning at the starting position going left. The third rotation (90 degrees) patterns is woven by starting from the end position going from the left to the right. The fourth rotation (180 degrees) pattern is woven by starting at the ending position, this time weaving from the right to the left. The Weft Ikat has the potential of creating an extensive number of patterns.



**FIGURE 18: Seashell I**



FIGURE 19: Seashell II



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Designing wearable art has offered a challenging merger of aesthetic concerns and craftsmanship. This thesis provided the exploration of ideas which I have always kept in my heart. These ideas led me to many other techniques which poses yet unanswered questions about texture, fabric design and structure, which I hope to solve in the future. New directions for my wearable art include my sensitivity towards color, texture and other characteristics of garments rather than just fashion.

Wall hanging pieces are an exploration, using the seashell as the design subject. I was very excited with the images for these pieces.

Upon reflection, a major accomplishment from this thesis is an improved ability to transform from two-dimensional forms and to create reality from fantasy.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kaori O'Connor, Creative Dressing, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Hakwon-Sa, Korea Its Land, People And Culture Of All Ages, Seoul, Korea, pp. 616-617.

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